

The Sunday School Service.

BY DAVID BAILEY.

Oct. 19th 1884.

Solomon's Choice.—1 Kings 3: 5-15.

GOLDEN TEXT: "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore, get wisdom."—Prov. 4: 7.

[Open the Bible and read the lesson.]

INTRODUCTION.

David was dead, Adonijah was dead, and Joab had been slain even at the foot of the altar thus expiating his crime in treacherously slaying Abner, son of Ner, and Amasa son of Jether. David's death-bed charge to Solomon in reference to this man was "Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down into the grave in peace." 1 Kings 2: 6.

Solomon had allied himself with Egypt by marrying a daughter of Pharaoh, which, while it was good as a matter of policy, no doubt had its influence in bringing about the idolatrous worship which prevailed to such an extent in later years.

Another thing we wish to notice here is found in 1 Kings 3: 2. "Only the people sacrificed in high places, because there was no house built unto the name of the Lord, until those days." It was well to worship God, and the people thought that by going to the top of a hill they would be nearer God. But in this we see again a reason for the future defection from the true worship. They had sacrificed without the temple and their worship had been acceptable, why then was it necessary that they should go up to Jerusalem to worship when there were high places in their own neighborhood.

Solomon felt his weakness and inexperience so he went up to Gibeon, the great high place near Jerusalem, and made great sacrifices to the Lord. It was indeed a kingly offering, "a thousand burnt offerings." Need we be surprised that God appeared to such a young man?

We find that when Solomon knew that he could choose what he would and receive it, he showed his judgment by choosing wisdom rather than riches, honor or long life. But one thing Solomon seemed to lack: He had the wisdom to know, but he did not have the will to do. Looking at his example Paul had reason to fear that "having preached to others he might himself become a castaway."

LESSON.

Verse 5. "In Gibeon." A hill near Jerusalem on the north where Solomon had gone to offer sacrifices. "In a dream." We could hardly call it a dream though it was of that nature, but if he saw in reality what he seemed to see, it was no dream. "Ask what I shall give thee." Equivalent to saying ask what thou wilt and I will give it to thee.

Verse 6. Instead of asking directly Solomon proceeds to recount the favors shown to his father. "Righteousness and uprightness." According to man's judgment, David's life would hardly come up to this mark, but God judges. "A son." For a king to be without a son to succeed him was looked upon as a curse from God, so a son might be classed as a blessing.

Verse 7. "Thou." Solomon was undoubtedly chosen of God, as his father was. "A little child." Solomon was nineteen or twenty years old at this time, but he was little better than a child to take charge of a great nation. "I know not." He meant by this that he did not know anything about even the first principles of government.

Verse 8. "In the midst of thy people." That is he was over them as a ruler, the observed of all observers. "Chosen." God had chosen this people so that his name might be kept alive on the earth. "Cannot be numbered." A figurative expression often used in the Bible to express a great number. The Jewish nation was now at the height of its prosperity.

Verse 9. "An understanding heart." This was asking for intellectual accumen rather than moral rectitude. "Good and bad." He wished to be able to decide who was in the right in cases brought before him. In those days there were no courts and all grievances were brought before the king and decided on the spot by him.

Verse 10. "Pleased the Lord." The request showed that Solomon was anxious to be well qualified to perform his duty as a ruler properly.

Verse 11. "God said." God did not speak audibly to Solomon, but no doubt he gave him inward assurance. "And hast not asked." Solomon asked nothing for himself, neither long life, riches, honor, nor the lives of his enemies.

Verse 12. "None like thee." No king or ruler so wise.

Verse 13. "Riches and honor." The Queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's riches and wisdom, and came a long way to see him and she honored him by saying the "half had not been told me."

Verse 14. "If." The if comes in even with Solomon and as well with him as any other, for as Solomon lived to be but sixty or thereabouts we would not consider that length of days had been given him. "Thy father David." The old king fell into temptation at times that he could not withstand, but he never forgot to turn to the true God when he was constrained to worship.

Verse 15. "Behold it was a dream." Though it is called a dream, it is evident that Solomon was deeply impressed with the reality of the vision, for he went down to Jerusalem and went before the ark of the covenant and offered more sacrifices.

The Heritage of the Ungodly.

A missionary of former days said to the writer: "Many years ago I set out to labor for Christ in Indiana. A friend who had been a long resident, was with me to give me such information as might be necessary. I remarked that the land around us was low and of a very poor quality: 'True,' said he 'but wait a little and I will show you as handsome a prairie as our Heavenly Father ever made.' We rode on, and gradually the land spread out before us rich in its soil and carpet of verdure, most inviting to the eye. 'Do you see that brick house yonder?' 'Yes.' 'Well, the owner living in it has had two sons hung. 'You behold that stone house?' 'Certainly.' 'You may think it remarkable, but the builder and resident of it has two sons in the state-prison. You cannot fail to see that house to the left?' 'I do.' 'Well, the resident of that has had a son hung. Farther on, do you see that grove, and that house pretty well set back?' 'Yes, I can see it distinctly.' 'The man living there has a son in the state-prison. Over there you can see another residence.' 'Yes.' 'You may think it incredible, but the man living there has had a son hung.'

"The facts stated led me to ask my informant, 'How came these things to happen?' The record is as black as any I have ever heard. Do give me the needed explanation.' 'I will do so in brief. When I settled on the other side of the marsh, those people settled there. The land, as might have been foreseen, proved very productive. They cultivated corn, wheat, oats, and planted orchards. The markets paid good prices. They soon came to be wealthy. The grain marketed in the fall left them little to do in the winter; so they gave themselves up to dissipation. They built neither a church nor a school-house. Their children grew up idle, ignorant, and vicious. Their apples were turned into cider; and their winter evenings were given up to conviviality. Soon cider was not strong enough, and other intoxicants came into use. They had frequent parties, and these parties meant dancing; and the dancing meant drinking; and the drinking meant a drunken revelry; the drunken revelry a fight; and the fight, meant too often, a murder. These are but the outlines. I need not enlarge upon the particulars."

Our missionary friend set me to thinking. How much unwritten history is there of similar neighborhoods and villages? Sodom settlers will leave behind them Sodom inhabitants. A few God-fearing men established in the wilderness, will make it blossom as the rose; and godless pioneers in the well-watered plain of Jordan will only prepare for the baptism of fire and salt. The setting up of a school will do little without a church. Teaching grammar will not originate pure conversation; the knowledge of arithmetic will not influence the addition of the graces; the study of Greek and Latin will not necessitate the tongue of truth; the acquaintance of chemistry will not be the solution of religious doubt; the mastery of geometry will not bring with it the axioms of eternal righteousness; geography may be understood with an inability to comprehend the boundaries of virtue and moral safety; natural philosophy will never convey to the mind the understanding of the science of salvation. The intellect must influence the moral forces in the way of obedience to God, or there will be a perpetual antagonism between knowledge and godly practice.—J. Waugh, in *American Messenger*.

Timely Help.

Mr. Spurgeon recently stated that a little old woman, poorly dressed, came into a vestry some years ago, at a time of great straits, and she said to him in this strange way, "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee." She put down £50 on the table, vanished and he had never seen her since. He never knew her name even. He supposed she would be in heaven now: it was some years ago, and she was very old then. Things had happened so, and it was his impression was that they would occur again.

Yearly Meeting at Beaver Dam, Frederick County, Md., June, 1884.

There are, doubtless, numbers of persons who would gladly have attended the yearly meeting of the old school German Baptists, at Beaverdam, if the distance had not been so great, and the necessary arrangements could have been made. These probably, would be interested to have a simple story told by one who was two days present on the occasion.

How large a meeting it was, is a question that will arise in the minds of some; and is not easily answered. Including all that attended it was supposed by some that the number reached about twenty-five hundred, and I suppose that was quite a close estimate.

I asked a member of the church how many he thought were at the meeting. I meant brethren and sisters, their relatives and friends and I suppose he understood me so. He thought fifteen hundred was not too high an estimate. I said I thought so too. Leaving about a thousand for the outside world. At the one side of the meeting ground there were fifteen or more acres of open woodland, and this afforded an excellent opportunity for the world to transact its business. The boarding tent was one hundred and twenty feet long, and forty-five feet wide, and there were five hundred and four plates on the tables. One of the men on the ground told me so.

In the year 1848, I was at the yearly meeting, held on the farm of Isaac Deardorf, Franklin county, Pa., and in my estimation the arrangements were not more than half as extensive as they were at Beaverdam. To board all the people, there were two rows of tables covered with canvass, in front of the house, which is yet standing. The yard in which the tables were placed, is still the same it was then; and by actual measurement is one hundred feet long, and forty feet wide. It would seem likely that at least ten feet space would be left at each end; and if so, the whole length of the tables would have been one hundred and sixty feet. Allowing eighteen inches for one seat on each side of the tables, there would have been room for about two hundred and twenty-five persons.

The meeting was held in the barn, which is also standing. There are two floors forty-one feet long; the one eighteen and the one sixteen feet wide. On either side there are mows, thirty one foot long, and twenty-three feet deep, and these were filled with seats. I suppose the meeting was not any larger than the one at Beaverdam.

I had a conversation with a brother advanced in years, concerning yearly meeting, and he informed me that he was at the yearly meeting held on the farm of George Royer, in 1829, about three miles north of Waynesboro Franklin county, Pa. I asked him whether he thought the meeting was any more than half as large as the meeting at Beaverdam; and he said he did not think it was. He further stated, that he often heard his father tell of the yearly meeting held at Price's meeting house, in about 1810, or perhaps a few years earlier, about one and a half miles north of Waynesboro, Franklin county, Pa., and the house was abundantly large for the occasion.

This house was built in 1798, of stone, one story, ten feet high; windows, fifteen panes, eight by ten glass. The date can be seen marked with chalk, on the boarded ceiling in the western corner of the house. The old part of the house, built in 1798 was thirty-three feet on the outside, and forty feet long. Two parts have been added since the first house was built; one part of twenty-five feet to the western end, and one the same length to the eastern end, used as a kitchen. Persons who have recollections of the time when the new parts were added, suppose that the one at the west end was built in about 1832, and the one at the eastern end, in about 1838.

In 1866 the yearly meeting was held on the farm of Jacob Price, about two miles north of Waynesboro, Franklin county, Pa. I was present while the meeting was continued, and would suppose it was four times as large as the meeting at Beaverdam; including brethren, sisters, their relatives, friends and strangers.

Allowing that the first large meeting or general conference, was held in 1742, the year in which Count Zinzendorf, from Germany held his seven conferences in Pennsylvania; and allowing that in 1810, a house 33x40 or rather 30x37, was abundantly large to hold the same kind of meeting; and the meeting of 1829 only having been about half as large as the meeting at Beaverdam; it would appear that for nearly a hundred years, the meetings increased slowly in size. One of the causes of the rapid increase for the last twenty and thirty years, probably is the increased facilities for traveling.

Of the meeting of 1829 it is said, there were few carriages, but a great many horses. For these a pasture field was kept in reserve, into which they would be turned loose. So far as

the southern portion of Franklin county, Pa., is concerned, 1830 is about the period when carriages or conveyances with springs, were first brought into use.

At the time these meetings took their rise, and the German language held the ascendancy, it would appear the common name was, *Die grosse versammlung*—the large meeting.

Count Zinzendorf, the Moravian missionary came to Pennsylvania in 1741, and remained about two years. He was said to be a German nobleman. His common name was Nicolaus Ludwig. He was born in the year 1700. To the conferences which he held he invited the members of other churches.

One of these was held at Oley, Berks county, Pa., in January 1742, to which a delegate was sent from the German Baptist church. On his return he did not report favorably; but said he was of the opinion that their church ought to have a similar conference of its own. Accordingly an appointment was made, but we do not have the place nor the precise date. I do not know whether the place and date are anywhere on record.

OBED SNOWBERGER.

Quincy, Pa., Sept. 29.

"Before They Call I will Answer."

In the year 1820, there lived at Nuremberg a widow of a laborer whose two sons were about completing their studies. But she was so poor, that when the youngest was about to pass his examinations, she knew not how to procure the fifty francs demanded for his diploma. She made known her trouble to her pastor, who advised her to borrow that sum. The widow replied, "I dare not do it, for I do not know how I can ever repay it." "Well," said the pastor, "let us ask the Lord to send you that amount, relying on His promise, 'If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.' Go home and pray and I will do the same in my study." Kneeling down, the pastor presented his request in earnest prayer to God. Then he tried to think of some way by which he could help the poor mother, for his own resources were exhausted. He left his study hoping that his walk in the city might bring some good result. Passing the house of a parishoner, some one seemed to say to him, "Go in and salute them." He knocked and the woman who opened the door exclaimed, "You have come at the right time."

The father then said to the pastor, "We desire your counsel. Yesterday we celebrated our silver wedding. We do not wish to spend money for a feast, but have put aside twenty-five florins as a small token of gratitude for all the blessings God has granted us during these twenty-five years of marriage. We do not know how to employ this money, and I just now said to my wife that you could indicate to us the best use to which it could be applied."

The pastor then related with much emotion the story of the poor widow. They both exclaimed "It is the finger of God. Take the money and carry it to her." It was now night, and the next day at nine o'clock the money must be paid. The pastor hastened to the home of the poor widow, and at her door heard her groans and half-uttered words of earnest prayer. He entered the room and said to her, "Before they call I will answer; and while they are yet speaking I will hear." He then explained to the astonished mother how their prayers had been answered, and her anxiety gave way to praise. They both knelt down and gave thanks to God who had so faithfully fulfilled his promise.—*Am. Messenger*.

A Godly Life,

There is no Christian force so potent as a godly life. There may be an answer to godliness. "Men may wrangle in high words about forms, phrases and ceremonies, and they can never gainsay the patience that displaces murmuring by prayer, the sacrifice that amounts to self-oblation, the love that covets for no reward, and the magnanimity that is most magnanimous where there is most to be forgiven. * * * Men who may meet you with what they deem unanswerable objections to your theology, who may never be induced to read your defenses of your views, can not avoid seeing and feeling the power of the silent eloquence of a holy life. They have often a high estimate of truthfulness, honesty, generosity, and patience, and will deem that the best kind of religion which yields these fruits. All talk and theorizing about the blessing of holiness as an experience is unavailing, unless it be linked with holiness of life. The great want of to-day is not better creeds or church politics, but a better type of Christian character in those who name the name of Christ.—*Religious Intelligencer*.